

ROAMING AT LARGE

Wild Horses Are Overrunning the National Forests.

ARE A MENACE TO PROPERTY

Any One Who Finally Discovers a Method to Settle This Problem Will Have Done a Great Service to Stockmen of Every Western State.

From the New York Tribune.

Wild horses by the thousands are overrunning the government National Forests of Nevada and neighboring states, and the authorities in Washington are besieged with petitions from stockmen and farmers begging them to put a stop to the nuisance. A recent dispatch from Reno conveyed the intelligence that there are fifteen thousand of the untamed beasts upon the Toiyabe, Toiyabe and Monitor forest reserves in Lander County alone, and that orders have been received by the forest rangers to begin a systematic war of extermination upon them. This dispatch, although twisted as to facts, does not exaggerate the number of horses now supposed to be roaming at large in the districts mentioned. As a matter of probable truth there are a good many more than fifteen thousand wild horses in Nevada and the neighboring states, and every herd is a pest to the owners of vegetation and domestic stock.

That part of the Reno telegram which is not true is that relating to the orders sent from Washington. Neither the forest rangers nor any other employees of the government have been told to destroy the horses, and unless they do receive such orders they will confine their energies to fencing crops from the trespassing animals or rounding them up when they appear and threaten damage to the range. Indeed, if half the stories brought to the capital are true, all the rangers in Uncle Sam's service would have little chance of destroying the big herds that are roaming over the Western states.

Within the last few years they have increased to such an extent that in many localities they are classed as "varmints," with wolves, wildcats and grizzlies, and every man's rifle is turned against them. No fence is strong enough to stop these horses, and when they appear in force they have been known to knock down and kill cows and calves. After each visitation from a herd the ranchman is likely to mourn the loss of his domestic horses, and it requires only a few days' association with their new companions for the best broken animals to become as wild as their nomadic comrades.

A study of the wild horse problem brings to light many interesting facts about the animals. The Legislature of Nevada, it seems, passed a law many years ago specifically allowing hunters to shoot wild horses and to sell their hides for what they could get in the open market. The law opened the way to a new and unus-

ual industry, and many men found the killing of wild horses very profitable. Besides the work was exciting and gave the business the added zest of sport.

As time went on and the business of killing these "outlaws" (as the wild horses were termed) on the ranges assumed greater and greater proportions, stockmen found that the professional hunters were, in many cases, abusing their rights and were killing branded and shod horses. This put an end to the business, for on complaint of the stockmen the Nevada Legislature promptly repealed the law. It is estimated that 15,000 animals were killed during the time that the law was in force. This figure gave the basis for last week's story.

The report, however, had good basis of fact, for the wild horse question has grown to be as serious in the last few years as it was when the Nevada Legislature was forced to enact the old law. The United States forest service has not given orders for the killing of a single horse because it has no right to do so. The forest officers of the Nevada national forests realize how bad conditions are, and will do anything to assist the stockmen to put down the nuisance.

Any one who finally discovers an effective method to settle this problem will have done a great service for the stockmen of every state west of the Missouri River. As an old and experienced stockman, now in the employ of Uncle Sam, said of this wild horse problem: "Theoretically it seems a very simple matter to handle, but practically it is quite the reverse." On the ranges of many of the national forests the supervisors have been at their wits' ends for several years trying to devise method to meet the difficulty. Apparently an entirely satisfactory method can not be found because of the inadequate estray laws now enforced in the different states. Under the circumstances, the following plan has been recommended to meet the conditions in the national forests:

"It the presence of the horses is seriously damaging the national forest range and public sentiment favors such action, the supervisor may, upon petition of a majority of the permittees of a grazing district, allow the horse to be gathered and disposed of according to the state or territorial laws. In such cases the forest service will, upon recommendation from the supervisor, co-operate in the construction of corrals or fences for the purpose of capturing the horses.

"Forest officers may drive unpermitted horses from the national forests at any time, but if the owners of the horses are known and ownership acknowledged the owner should be allowed to adjust the matter by paying the grazing fee. If he refuses to apply for a permit, then a trespass charge should be brought against him and the case conducted according to instructions.

"Unbranded horses may be handled according to the state estray laws but forest officers can not be allowed to gather such horses for the purpose of using or selling them, nor can they be allowed to collect any remuneration from any person for corralling unclaimed horses. The policy of the forest service will be, therefore, to co-operate with the stockmen of the state or territorial authorities when they take the initiative in disposing

GOT THEM GUESSING

Mystery Concerning the Identity of Eugene Harrach.

CLAIMS TO BE A NOBLEMAN

The Youthful Prisoner Was Arrested at the Regina Hotel on a Felony Accusation of Signing His Name to a Fictitious Check For \$640.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 2.—The mystery concerning the identity of Eugene Harrach, the youthful prisoner arrested at the Regina hotel yesterday on a felony accusation of signing his name to a fictitious check for \$640 in payment for automobile hire, is puzzling the local police and the acting Austro-Hungarian consul, Karl Ruiz de Rozas.

Harrach asserts that he is Eugene Othmar Count Von Harrach, one of the richest noblemen of the Austrian empire. He also claims to be related to the family of Count Otto Von Waldstein, who a year ago was erroneously thought to have been the supposed desperado slain in a fight with a posse of officers at Willows. The police admit there may be several solutions to the mystery of Harrach's identity.

In the meantime Harrach is detained in jail pending the investigation now being made by the police as to his identity. The prisoner has spent some eight weeks in this city, living at one of the leading hotels and spending money lavishly. All of his hotel bills, amounting to \$2,000, it is said, were paid.

CONGRESS TO PAY RANSOM.

WASHINGTON, April, 2.—President Roosevelt and Secretary Root want Congress to reimburse the citizens of the United States who raised

of wild horses in the national forests, but the present laws and regulations do not admit of independent action by the forest service.

The wild horse problem is only one of the many which stockmen have to contend with which the government is trying in one way or another to solve on the ranges of the national forests. Predatory animals, such as wolves, coyotes, mountain lions and wildcats, do thousand of dollars' worth of damage to stock each year in all parts of the country. On some ranges forest officers have to contend with rustlers, who sometimes succeed in stealing the great part of the stock which the predatory animals do not kill. Poisonous plants are another nuisance which give the stockmen considerable trouble in many parts of the country.

Uncle Sam has always shown a disposition to co-operate with the stockmen in combating these nuisances; in fact, he is doing better than merely meeting the stockmen half way in the work. On many of the national forest ranges for the last year rangers and guards have been assigned to the work of hunting and trapping, with the sole aim of killing off the animals that prey upon stock. The work has met with marked success, and hundreds of wolves and coyotes have succumbed to the bullets and the poison of the hunters. Each animal killed means a decided saving to the sheep industry, for it is estimated that one wolf averages about \$1,000 damage each year.

Forest officers are co-operating with the stock associations to stop the stealing of livestock and run the rustlers out of the country. The war on poisonous plants has been carried on for more than a year by the forest service, in co-operation with the bureau of plant industry, and, while the investigations have just been begun, it is already seen that their growth can be checked in many states.

If it is possible to check the wild horse nuisance as easily as the other troubles which have bothered the stock interests, both the stockmen and forest officers will find the Western ranges rid of another serious drawback which helps to retard progress in the business.

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the sum of approximately \$66,000 in 1901 to ransom Miss Ellen M. Stone the American missionary who was captured by brigands in Turkey in the year mentioned. The President transmitted to Congress today a communication of Secretary Root on the subject in which the latter strongly urged that reimbursement be provided out of the federal treasury for those who contributed to the Stone ransom fund.

The late Secretary Hay held that Turkey could not be responsible for lawless acts of the brigands who captured M'ss Stone. Secretary Root agrees with the conclusions reached by its predecessor in this matter.

APPROPRIATION FOR FORTS.

WASHINGTON, April 2.—An appropriation to carry into effect contemplated fortifications for Puget Sound as planned by the Endicott and Taft boards, has been agreed upon tentatively yesterday by the sub committee of the senate committee on appropriations which is considering the general fortification bill. When completed this work will represent an outlay of between nine and ten million dollars, of which

more than four million dollars already has been appropriated.

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